SW, JP, HR, PM

1/19/72

Mr. Martin
Senator Edward Kennedy
Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Martin,

In writing you earlier, I reported what I had been told and what I have in a clipping, that Dr. Lattimer professed doubt that Oswald was the assassin before the favor bestowed upon him by Burke Marhsall. I think I ngelected to give you a source so that you could, should you so desire, confirm my accuracy. One from which I quote is Roger Wetherington, in the New York Daily News of the 10th:"He added that he had had some reservations before".

I know of no case in which Dr. Lattimer ever expressed any doubt and believe that in every case he was explicit in saying there was or could be no doubt. I will now quote from the earliest of his writing. He spoke in New York City February 14,1966 (New York State Journal of Medicine 1782ff), his topic being "Similarities in Fatal Woundings of John Wilkes Booth and Lee Harvey Oswald."

In fairness to Dr. Lattimer and to you, for I am developing an opinion based not as much on solid fact as long experience in this field, I want to begin by telling you that in what I can assess Dr. Lattimer's expressions and opinions are entirely in accord with those of the radical right, including the use of some of their standard cliches. I think you may see familiar phrasing in what follows. My central point, however, is this man's honesty, subsidiary to that being his judgement, the dependability of his non-urological opinions, and I am beginning to wonder, his rationality on this subject.

In the caption of a picture of Oswald on page six (and of all those available he just happened to select the one widely misrepresented by right extremists as showing Oswald giving a Communist salute whereas he was displaying handcuffs), these are the words of the man not persuaded Oswald was the assassin until now: "Lee Harvey Oswald, enemy (Communist) sympathizer, who shot President Kennedy..."

Dr, Lattimer has a fondness for footnotes he does not indulge in the second quotation, again a pattern in this kind of meaningless unattributed attribution that is invention: "While both shootings may well have been the actions of excited men in attacking what they considered to be a national enemy, there are many sophisticated observers who regard this point of view as unduly naive. [Not only are not "many", but not a single one of these "sophisticated observers" is named. What Dr. Lattimer might consider sophisticated in politics or observation seems increasingly more like that of Robert Welch than the late President.] They believe that both accused presidential [sic] assassins were active enemy sympathizers (Booth for the Confederacy and Oswald for the Communists),[23,24] and since both shootings took place during an era of large-scale undercover operations, psychological persuasion, philosophic rivalry, and intelligence activity, that both men may have been silenced as part of a larger design."

Would you care to consider that the "period" described by these "sophisticates" could be almost any period in history.

I think my knowledge of the opinions of responsible people on the assassination of the President is as good as any, and I assure you there has been nothing this sick, nothing of this character, not coming from the more extreme elements of the right. Medical men are more numerous in these groups than patients might hope. Consistent with this is (page 1788) the typical and utterly irrelevant "the man Jack Rubenstein, born Jacob Rubenstein." I recall no such usages not of that extreme, and if there are any occasions when those of this persuasion failed to make this hint, it does not come to mind. It is hardly a "similarity" in the Booth killing, any more than the self-castration by Boston Corbett (who, by the way, changed his name, too, but Dr. Lattimer fails to say in noting this, from what - pp.1782-3).

Now, if one check's the cited footnotes, one finds two lies. The first reads, "Oswald revokes his U.S.citizenship" and the second,"Oswald pledges allegiance to USSR". Oswald was careful not to renounce his citizenship, and he never got USSR citizenship.

If you are interested in these parallels in the assassinations of the alleged assassins, the chief one, according to Dr. Lattimer, seems to be that Booth was shot in the neck while Oswald was shot in the abdomen (how much more "similar" can they be?); that Booth may have shot himself (elsewhere and on p. 1793), that both men were "repeatedly in trouble with the authorities over a succession of minor infractions"(p. 1794), another lie; and "It is no less than amazing that each of the accused presidential assassins was successfully killed by a single bullet..."(p. 1794). By understanding what is no less than "amazing" to Dr. Lattimer one may perhaps better evaluate the opinions he expressed of what he claims to have seen in the film and what he claims it "completely" proves.

Outside the Marines, Oswald had but a single brush with the law, when he was attacked by a Cuban extremist who hated the late President. This is hardly "a succession of minor infractions" through which Oswald was "repeatedly in trouble with the authorities". I have already sent you some samples of Oswald's anti- Communist record. They abound, should you want more.

But are you getting a picture of the man who is disqualified under the contract but becomes an expert to the "legendary" Burke Marshall, acting in your Senator's name? The quotation is from Esquire, which also quotes Mr. Marshall as describing another service to the Senator thus: "it was a pretty bad thing, I suppose..."[sic] What makes one "legendary" is, I "suppose", how one decides who is expert.

What he is now considering, or says he is, as he has said for months he has been, is letting those critical of the official account have access to this film. That, now, can really be "a pretty bad thing". As you may learn, if it happens.

With no confidence in the "legendary",

Harold Weisberg